

Travel Diary from Moravia

from 14.6. to 22.6.2002

The stimulus to make this week's journey around Moravia was for me music festival *Concentus Moraviae* and its program. This festival takes always place in June in various south Moravian towns, i.e. around Brno, but not in Brno itself. Since every concert is somewhere else, it gives a good reason to pilgrimages to many places, where you might otherwise not come at all. And because my experience of various places was varied and picturesque it can serve other travellers – minimally as inspiration or warning. (but this in only very small amount. Generally said was my experience positive.)

14-th June 1-st Day

route: Praha – Hustopeče (bus)

The opening day of my pilgrimage meant mainly to make going to the vote in Prague and then in half an hour to the Florenc bus station. Then after getting off the bus to find a suitable place for the tent, pitch it and dress up for the concert. To manage my settling down with the tent before concert was a problem I constantly had to cope during the whole time of my travel. That day it was for the first time, and although everything went smooth according to the plan – I was able to find quickly the place I had chosen in the map as a possible camping place (on the Křížový vrch near to summer cinema arena), I was quite stressed and had headache for most of the time until I went to sleep.

Hustopeče (partly according to the guide-book)

First mentioned in 1240 together with vineyards and wine stores. From 1323 to 1600 it was owned by the Queen's Monastery in Brno (founded by Elisabeth Richeza). After that it was purchased by the Lichtenstein family. I hadn't know, how far north the Lichtenstein estates with centre on the Bohemian-Austrian border stretched. It was renowned through its fairs for imported cattle from Galicia and Hungary and through liquorice processing. The local printing mill, owned by Ludvík Masaryk was the first one to publish a critique on so-called Manuscripts (This is a 19-th Century affair concerning fake monuments of Czech writing dated originally back to early Middle Ages. Fervent polemics concerning their credibility lasted for several decades until they were definitely proved false.) The town had formerly two churches: the hospital Holy Ghost church from the 15-th Century and St. Wenceslas church from the 16-th Century. The former perished towards the end of the 19-th Century, the latter though collapse of its spire in 1961, followed by demolition of the still surviving presbytery. Subsequently a new church was raised in the same place above the romanesque crypt. – In the new church, I found a detailed description of what actually happened:

On the square of Hustopeče stood a really old church, perhaps romanesque (and old photographs, which were showed there, there was really seen that the church front had romanesque layout – if it hadn't been re-introduced to that condition later). It was

later changed to two (!) nave gothic church (I.e. – probably the presbytery) adjacent to a new elevated gothic hall containing valuable frescoes. One of them was copied down and together with one gothic chest it's everything they nowadays have in the Brno museum from this monumental church. The true reason consisted probably in the frequented road leading across the square just below the church. Before the making of the motorway Brno-Bratislava it was the main route in this direction and very busy. Eyewitnesses say that in the 1950s it was always stuffed by tanks and heavy trucks. The church suffered from shaking and at its tower a visible fissure appeared, but nobody cared – the church was neither allowed nor able to do so and the local might holders were wholly indifferent., until one day, better said one night in 1961– about 2 a.m. whole tower collapsed and fell straight onto the nave, which was thus destroyed too. But there was still the beautiful presbytery standing. But local communist rulers ordered its immediate pulling down. For about a year after that lasted squabbling with the (of course communist ruled!) Ministry of cultural heritage in Prague, who didn't want to remove the status of national monument from it. The district authority in Břeclav prevailed at last – because the religious one's must be taught a lesson, and if we left them the presbytery, they'd soon require reparation of the nave and this and that... And it was the definitive end of this singular monument.

The new church is flamboyant, although by nothing resembling the old one. It is built upon a ground plan in a form of a fan, whose lamellas converge and centre upon the altar piece, and at its extremity, in its highest point, a spire shoots up from it with royal crown on the top. This masterpiece of architecture makes a really proud impression; it resembled to me the motion, which the peacock makes when it spreads its tail –first sideways and then in a single moment it tosses it up. The inside of the church is also beautifully shaped with graceful modern stations of the cross. In the last years before completing the new church – it was brand new when I visited it –the function of the parish church was obviously to the small church or chapel on Křížový vrch, where I camped. It was surely happy to breathe out after such a hard work; it was just obtaining a new coat by hands of Slovak workers.

The town of Hustopeče was walled with five gates. Remnants of the original wall can be seen in the Na Hradbách street - but quite dilapidated. Generally all parts of the town remote from the square were pretty downfallen. Maxmillian II. decree from 1572 written in Czech raises the statute of the town and issues coat of arms for it. The renaissance period commemorates itself by a stone well decorated with Tritons and dolphins of 1595 - I must have missed it – by several arcade houses with multilevel cellars. The nicest of them houses a wine cellar, a nice place. A stone blazon is a memory remaining after so-called "Horenský soud" (Wineyard bailey) . The town has a pseudo-renaissance town hall – quite a nice one – from the beginning of the 20-th Century.

The guidebook has nevertheless forgotten about an important *baroque* monument, which is a huge Holy Trinity column in the square, directly opposite the church with ample plastic decoration showing popular baroque saints (Czech patrons and Jesuit saints), with several chronostichs - of which every points to a different date! The protestant church is also there and right in front of in a splendid statue of St. John of Nepomuk.

15-th June, 2-nd Day

route: Hustopeče - Pouzdřany - Novomlýnská nádrž (on foot)

Most of the experience shown above I gathered only the following day. After tour around the town I replenished my food store and set out for the first day of wandering. The original plan was to reach Pohořelice and from there to transfer to the next target, Moravský Krumlov. Already the first day showed how unrealistic my planning had been. In burning heat (surely over 30°C) I struggled through bare hills on the ridge over Velké Pavlovice, covered solely by vineyards and sometimes orchards. I really experienced, what it is steppe. (The Pouzdřany steppe was one of my alternative targets along the route.) I took moments of rest under any bush, shade was scarce. When I finally reached Pouzdřany and settled down to short rest in front of the pub, storm clouds began gathering. So I had to spend in the pub of Pouzdřany about three hours, heard there the announcement of election results (on local scale: radio played short, then a voice pronounce crisply: "Election results in Pouzdřany: First place KSČM (The Communist Party) 103 votes, second place the Social democracy 97 votes, the Third Place The coalition 28 votes; peach branch (symbol of the renewed communists) was brought in and celebration began). But luckily I had a company in that pub and even for a short bit of way to Novomlýnská nádrž: an interesting couple sister with a younger brother from Litomyšl heading for Pálava. Finding a place to pitch a tent was not easy, because you had to choose between a concrete causeway and soaked swamps, so I camped finally only in thick dark about half past nine.

Pouzdřany

I have no guidebook here so only by memory: A beautiful white church, I guess that from the renaissance times (which north of Alps looks like a little bit wild gothic; the map claims: "gothic from the end of 15-th Century) It has two beautiful old doors, probably original ones. It bears also a stonepiece commemorating kind of romantic decease of a certain member of Liechtenstein family through a bolter horse. The inscriptions betray that the village used to be inhabited by German speaking people – which explains the strong communist resentments. (But Hustopeče too was a German enclave, the result of which is e.g. that up to day nobody knows, how its local costume looked like.) The map also remembers a small baroque shrine out of the village in direction vineyards, and that is well, because I shouldn't forget that cosy place of rest, just made for pious pilgrims to rest on grass.

Water retainer Nové Mlýny

I was curious about it – after all those complaints of the preservationists I had heard. The map told me that originally in the middle of the alluvial forest below Pálava three rivers met: Dyje, Jihlava and Svatka. Original junction of Dyje with the other two is now covered by the artificial lake, but meeting of Svatka and Jihlava remained, so I was curious how it looks like. Everything was promising at the beginning: the alluvial forest was soaking with humidity and swelled with life after the storm. But then I came to the bank of Svatka and I Was immediately taken down. A concrete causeway stretches

for miles on both banks. And the same was with Jihlava a little further; only that there the causeway was only on one side. It had one advantage – you could move swiftly along those roads, watching the ways of the (wild)life which I more felt than understood. Time pressed; night was falling as I hadn't yet found any camping place – camping was impossible on the concrete causeway and elsewhere everything was swamp. Finally I found a camping place near a sluice gate; I did the cooking and go to sleep.

16-th June, 3-nd Day

route: Water retainer Nové Mlýny – Pohořelice (on foot) (- Brno – Moravský Krumlov bus/train)

When I set off in the morning I didn't know that I had ahead one of the hardest days of my travel. Finding my way through the alluvial forest directing north was exacting at places and requiring good sense of orientation, but mainly the stifling and humid atmosphere made walking even more unbearable than yesterday's glowing sun. On the top of all the misery my sandals broke, so I could make a choice between sandals that fell apart and constraining trainers (and this dilemma plagued me for the whole march on). A small reward for all that fuss was the possibility of watching unusually varied living things. If I only knew all those birds! Thus I pressed sluggishly on. To reach Pohořelice at 11? No way! I stilled my hunger at a felled half wild cherry and by two o'clock I have only reached a small village still some two kilometres before Pohořelice, where I sank tired on the football ground. The last section leads on a road, so I am passing a large black cross, an ominous sign of senseless malice upon innocent ones – the memorial of a death march, during which in 1945 a large part of German inhabitants of Brno perished (but it is said that there were among them also people with just a German sounding name!) – mainly women and children. An undefined stench rules over Pohořelice, probably of agricultural origin. The local train route operates only on weekdays. What's worse, there is no bus connection in direction Dolní Kounice and Moravské Bránice, buses from here go only to Brno. Fortunately the Brno bus comes immediately, although a considerable crowd is waiting for it – some among them are those who couldn't get in the previous one. But to fight through my way into it is the only chance; then I'll have to change in Brno in ten minutes for a train to Moravský Krumlov, otherwise I won't make it for the concert. I manage to do both and I can finally enjoy the way full of tunnels through wooded countryside from Brno to Střelice, Hrušovany and Znojmo. I meditate whether the STeG company really meant it serious the other day to make competition to the KFNb (The emperor Ferdinand's North Railway), when it lead its main route to Vienna through such a requiring terrain, but perhaps it had no other choice, since the best direct route was already occupied. From Moravský Krumlov railway station it is still about two kilometres to the town. The bus which serves as connection to the train didn't bother to wait till I walk from the far end of the train and left. But the way is nice, paved and lightly descending. I can see a nice looking building from afar which I consider to be a castle house. A young man offering me lift to the town clears my error: That's not a castle it's "Floriánek". Well, if this is the case, I really had better to take a lift to the castle. It has a ghastly look. The courtyard is lit by tall industrial-made lamp-posts from the 1950's, there's no sign of a garden or park. I discovered the park only later, it's behind the castle. It's very large, intersected

by several hollowed farm-track, one of them leads even below it in a tunnel. A remote corner of the park is an ideal place for camping. I went to sleep hungry; there is no pub open in Moravský Krumlov after ten o'clock. It's good luck that several pastries remained from the morning. But I can have a delectable view of the darkened park full of flying fire-flies.

17-th June, 4-th Day

route: Moravský Krumlov – Ivančice (on foot)

Because I had no time to view the town the day before, I put off the departure and went to see it. It's peculiar ground plan (not without reason it's called Krumlov, *Krumm-au* means in German "squint eye", but the eye which it is meant by that is the river loop). The town, squeezed into a practically circular meander of Rokytná and "Floriánek" on the opposite hill invite to do so. I enjoy also a double breakfast and buy food. "Floriánek" is a church on rectangle ground plan with four spires – so it resembles more a castle. It stands upon a rock above the river, in a place where a certain nobleman was saved from a fall down in the last moment by the skill of his horse. It's a beautiful place including the way there through the forest on the slope. The valley of Rokytná is regrettably occupied mainly by factories, Very little has survived of the walls. One other peculiarity: The town authorities reside here – in a cloister, which makes a funny contrast to political reality: the whole Oslavany region, even the whole district of Znojmo is politically dominated by communists. The mayor himself, who I had the opportunity to see by opening the concert the day before, wasn't very eloquent and the town – to be frank – makes a bit shabby impression.

Having viewed the town I do my packing quickly and set out for my journey furnished with two bottles of water. The way leads through the Rokytná valley to Ivančice. For the first time I refill the bottles at a charming place with a gorgeous stone – as if made for resting there. But then I have difficulty to find the place of the first stopover – the village Rokytná. I emerged from the valley at the place where i should go down again. The way is long and rather monotonous. I rest at noon by a small bridge near Budkovice and clear up the consequences of a small disaster in the shape of yogurt in a nature-friendly (i.e. paper) packing in my backpack. To Ivančice I got only in late afternoon. The town meant a disappointment for me: there's no trace of the once illustrious life of the Brethren's community (however the guidebook writes that something has survived). The (catholic) church in the square is beautiful of a great architectonic worth, with a detailed description of everything inside. I use its coolness to change and leave my pack there before viewing the town, which I do quickly over. The surroundings of the church are occupied by street market and I suppose that just this is the aspect which is most important in the eyes of the locals. I ponder for a while my staying for the service. I choose to leave, but determined not to go very far. I pass a hill with panorama of the town and not far from it I make my camp in a – probably private – meadow and enjoy minimally two hours before the dark. But there are plenty of ticks here.

18-th June, 5-th Day

route: Moravské Bránice – Dolní Kounice (on foot) and back (bus); **Oslavany – Brno – Kyjov** (train)

Today I'm going to travel mainly by train; this should free me of the backpack, which is rather a burden that slows me down. I descend to the station Ivančice-Letovisko, but there is no timetable and nobody knows when the train goes. So I'll have better to walk to Ivančice. Below the station there is a pub and a really artistic mill, full of sculptures and plastic art, all very colourful; even the railing is coloured. I wash myself and my trousers at a pump, then I walk over a hill to Moravské Bránice. There I dispose of my pack and follow my course to Dolní Kounice. Before two days I tried to approach them from south, so I hope I'll be able to see the Premonstratense monastery *Rosa Coeli* there today. The marked path doesn't lead on the road, but over the hills, and makes such a bend that I choose finally to go back to the road. I feel impressed by Dolní Kounice, especially by its light air of unobtrusive refinement. But I want to find the monastery first. The way leads over the square, past a rather unusual parish church in the style of empire classicism, to another church, an old, gothic one, once belonging to the Brethren, now to the Orthodox Church. The place breathes out still spirituality. I sit on the grass, children straggle here, some with mothers – it's now time for them to go home from school. The Orthodox Church celebrates now, at midsummer its Whitsun, the festivity of descending spirit. There's a notice board on the door with truly spiritual message. I'll go no further, this here is my finish, here it was, where I should have come.

Refreshed in spirit I go down to the town and enjoy its sweetness at a charming triangular square under lime trees – in a pastry café. I take a bus for the way back to Moravské Bránice. My passion for everything concerning the railway doesn't let me rest before I have a train trip around the short local railway to Oslavany – when will I get here next? So I pass Ivančice once more; I cross junction of Jihlava and Oslava in a wonderful wetland and large heaps start looming in front of me. The station in Oslavany is overshadowed by ironworks and a huge junk heap. I have about an hour, so I set out for the centre, but I don't reach the square – it's rather far away and I don't want to miss my motor train. I rush from the train in Bránice and fetch my pack from Left luggage office and after three minutes I am sitting back on my seat again, which raised attention of girls and teachers from some school in Brno, who are there on a trip and have got on the train in Ivančice.

I use my short time for changing trains in Brno to get a shower at the station and an important operation: funds are riding low – I've overdrawn my budget (train fares have gone up considerably, even when using my discount Z-card); if I can get any money at the post office I can continue for several more days; otherwise there will be no more adventure but the way home. The post is generous, it gave me money, no matter how much – or little I have on my account, so I can go further to Kyjov. It's a two track line, now even electrified, leading in a wide trough with little inspiring countryside. Slavkov castle can be seen from afar.

The usual trouble with looking for a campsite awaits me in Kyjov too. Kyjov is a busy town, so the affair is even more complicated. I don't fancy much the grove next to the

station and use the map to find the town “green”. But it’s very busy; there are pubs in there and a swimming pool, that won’t be the right place either. Then the map directs me to the castle house – it’s hermetically closed. Nearly despairing I climb a hillock behind the castle. There I found a small church in green – probably originally a churchyard, and there I finally find a quiet place. Well, I’ll sleep in a churchyard tonight. The soil is on this former cemetery unexpectedly hard and sandy, but I conquer it in the end and my tent is raised and I can set out for the concert. After it, with a relief from newly established financial balance, I land in a restaurant and watch the town sink into twilight. Kyjov is not a very interesting town, but it has something that is rather rare in our country: a white-laced renaissance town hall. (The book says: from years 1561-2.) It isn’t pure renaissance however; it’s been complemented by the other half, which is an – again white – functionalist building. A little apart of this double building stands on the other side of the square a mighty structure of a hotel (again white, concrete) in the best style of the 1970s. Strangely enough, this symbiosis doesn’t spoil the impression. Behold, what is ever possible.

19-th June 6-the Day

route: Kyjov – Koryčany – Boskovice (on foot, by bus, by train)

I am setting out in the morning with a not perfectly clear idea what to do. To reach Boskovice on foot would mean 40km in a woodland landscape (in fact karst), and I know that it is not possible. The single alternative is though through Brno again. So I’ve chosen the sing tourist track that leads approximately in the right direction and leave everything else to chance. First I must make a long march uphill between vineyards, only after the village of Čeložnice I finally plunge between trees of a forest. I am passing an ancient ruined rangers’ camp but the charm of the wood draws on me gradually. The way is again longer than I had expected, but it’s beautiful. On the top of the woody ridge there are several scattered houses and cottages and a way meeting. Finally I begin to go down. Past another crossroads I can hear a funny noise and, yes – there it is: a real rarity –a working petroleum pump. Here, on the northern slope of unimportant Ždánický les, there is an oil well. A little bit further the way disappears on a large pasture. I stray over a meadow with many installed severe warnings labels to trespassers – it’s private. But the inhospitable owner at last managed to show me to the right direction downwards. The last section of the way above Koryčany leads through a large desolated game-park. At my arrival to the square a pleasant looking pub opens to me and I am very thirsty. Unfortunately, my bus goes immediately and I take it. The bus serves practically everybody from neighbouring villages to get home, mainly workers form the prosperous cabinet factory (the Koryna kitchens), so we make a circle around all the villages, among which there are also Střílky with a baroque manor house right opposite the bus stop, which has been recently bought by Czech hinduists for their swami. I end up finally at an empty train station only about 5km from Koryčany and the nearest service to Brno on this two-track electrified line is in two and half hours. I await it being hungry with a bottle of no longer cool water in a scanty shade of a guardroom.

The further course of way is more or less standard; the services continue each other without delay: Brno, Skalice nad Svitavou, Boskovice. I reach the church this time still with my pack. It’s going to be French organ works and the mayor, who is an intelligent

looking old gentleman, talks with professional knowledge about music and organs. This is already the third mayor I've known during this journey and the overall looks of Boskovice just confirmed my observation that the town reflects qualities of the mayor. I've been impressed by it in the best possible way, but everything in its time. The church of Boskovice is a mighty hall with a pointed spire, somewhere between gothic and renaissance, but it is only partly true: a lot of this is the "Mocker style", however not unimpressive. The inside of the church is unfortunately much poorer. Semicircular windows let only little light in, so it is quite dark. And opposite the side entrance looms a King-kong life-size painting in aniline purple hue of the newest catholic hit: Jan Sarkandr the new catholic saint. This is really something the church didn't deserve. But in the presbytery I can see something else, which richly compensates for that cultural shock. There are carved epitaphs of the last generation of local lords of Boskovice from the house of Zástřizl. Two couples of them are there. And incredibly true they depict the characters of portrayed individuals! One can nearly feel their mindset and disputes incarnated in marble. The elder couple shows rulers of indomitable will and economy, even reckless obsession. And really –it was in their times when Boskovice got the strongest impulse to their transformation and further development. The younger couple, splendid and smart in their posh beauty shows also kind of rebellious uncertainty, hesitation making them stick somewhere between lust for property and noble tendency to squander it. But in their eyes, especially with the woman, can be seen even more: affection or even love. They are wonderful carvings!

I remembered the church from one ancient stopover in Boskovice, but I was puzzled by its surroundings; according to what I remembered it should stand by a road with a bus station behind it and the road should then continue up into the square. But I soon realised that it was really once so, but the town managed to heal all wounds it had obtained through the long rule of communism; it has lead the transport out of the centre and has either restored the pulled down walls and houses or replaced them by perfectly fitting new structures.

That high road onto which I was once swept here and soon again removed had also levelled to ground part of the heritage that is Boskovice now most proud of, but nobody, including me, had then an idea thereof. A large Jewish settlement situated parallel with the historical main square, now with roughly 30 restored building, two synagogues – one restored, one not yet and equipped with a tour trail. I visited it even that very night after the concert, before I directed my steps towards the large amphitheater, built for folk festivals, because that day I didn't raise my tent but slept there on a bench. I also enjoyed a good meal after having hungered for the whole day, in a restaurant with candles on tables. I amused myself quite by the contrast: Next to me there were smart couples who had arrived in a polished car for their *hoeurs á deux*, together with people of less representative looks, students probably, and them me. It was a nice evening.

20-th June 7-the Day

route: Boskovice - Skalice nad Svitavou- Lysice- wood under Strhaře (on foot, by bus)

Before I start my today's itinerary I must stay for a while in Boskovice. I allowed myself two hours for it, but I tarried there nearly to lunch time. Let's have first the extract from the guide book (with a bit of my own mind):

Boskovice

„Boskovice lies in the in the centre of the Boskovice rill, there, where the last outskirts of Dražanská vrchovina fade into lowlands of Malá Haná. It originated probably in the 11-th Century, since 1463 they have been a partly-privileged township and got its full town status probably (!) under Joseph II. The gothic castle (*built by the family of Boskovic, part of the original Estates, maybe even of Slavonic origin; a very frequented first name within it was Tas; one Tas of Boskovice became even a bishop in Olomouc*) was reshaped under rule of the families of Eder and Zástřizl in renaissance style. (*Everything that remained of it is maximum one small portal. The castle towers in a picturesque way over a conic hill above the town. A drawn out ridge of it then separates the tow from the Svitava valley. That Eder of Štiavnica held Boskovice for a single year. He was mine prospector from Hungary, who had become enough rich to buy an estate. But he couldn't keep the wealth, so he had to sell it again.*) In Boskovice or not much later a St.James church was raised in the square, which was subsequently rebuilt or adapted many times. The empire-style castle was built in years 1819-26. (*After passing of the Zástřizls got the estate after the 30 years' war a clever second-range offspring of the Dietrichstein family ruling in south Moravia, who hadn't been aimed at playing any significant role and grounded here another line of the house. They owned the estate till the 19-th Century when it came by marriage into hands of a noble emigrant from France Mensdorff-Pouilly and his great grandson owns it today once more. It is now restored, but it had to suffer hard times. A ladies boarding school was here and installing of kitchens and lavatories didn't do much in favour of the old rooms of the ancient house. Adjacent to the house , which is situated just below the castle, there are vast gardens and other buildings – riding hall etc. I had an individual guided tour there because there are not yet many visitors in June. I discovered there a rarity. They have there surely untuned an badly kept – but still an original hammerklavier.*) There are also other historical sights including another church of Boskovice dedicated to All Saints. – *It rests in its still enclave surrounded by a circular wall, probably of the churchyard once already beyond the crossroads out of the town and it breathes peace and serenity.* An independent architectural complex is the former Jewish town situated between the square and the castle hill. A lot of priceless buildings have been destroyed here by unpremeditated acts, but the Big synagogue, baths and more other buildings survived. The Jewish Cemetery from the 17-th Century is one of the largest in our land – *I haven't managed to see it.*

Having completed the full tour I set out over the castle hill and then through the shaded Pílské valley towards Skalice. After not more than one hour walking I get

without problems to Skalice station and get acquainted with another distinguished quality of Boskovice its beer and promise solemnly that from that hour on I will always and everywhere further the praise and honor of the make Černá Hora. (It cannot be in a minimum compared to Starobrnno which dominates the region.) An arriving bus offers me an opportunity to avoid the passage of Svitava valley on dusty roads (a part of it even on a high road) and I take it quickly heading to Lysice. Lysice didn't make an outstanding impression on me: a church, a large supermarket – nearly a department store, and everywhere you see promotion of local highly successful agricultural firm. Just by way – bread I bought there was so crumbly, that you couldn't cut it even after three days, when it was nearly hard. The manor house was further on my way and I reached it at 3 p.m. in the time of largest heat. Twice I plunged into its fountain – after arrival and before leaving. It's a typical classicist structure with a little straitened gateway. I chose from the four offered guided tours the one that leads through its gardens. (My tour is again individual, but this time is the student not that well informed. She is just at a gardeners' school in Velké Meziříčí – this is also a place, where my route leads – and the work here is for her just part of obligatory training.)

In the prolonged afternoon I plunge into a forest beyond Lysice and climb over wood paths and small roads to the hills. In the early evening I reach the village of Bedřichov where I rest a while in the shade of the church, but then I set out further on the hills' crest south. The westering sun sketches fantastic shades and shapes in the country, which in a turn resembles the most forlorn Highlands – it is celebration of light. I pass through the village of Kozárov, where a crowd of thirsty teenagers is awaiting the opening hour of the pub. I don't want to wait, so I go on. The way is descending now. Only after eight I plunge into a forest again and find a beautiful place near a forest pond, which is probably used in summer by a tourist or scout company as their camping place. On the opposite slope you can see tall stumps – it has been recently chopped. One of them is a real straddling male. It's about eight and I have to say that I couldn't wish a better camping place. So I pitch my tent, chant vesper, do the cooking and hardly manage to do everything before the dark falls. Meanwhile I find that I am probably near a village because during that short time the pod was minimum tree times visited by someone. The most curious visitor is a man who is walking his dog in such a way that he pushes it out of the car and follows him driving behind – and that is, in a forest, in an untouched nature, as you put it - oh, the humane perversion! But I don't mind walking of dogs and bathe myself in the pond before going to sleep.

21. June - 8-th day

route: wood under Strhaře - **Lomnice - Borač - Tišnov - Velké Meziříčí** (on foot, train)

Although it wasn't easy to say good bye to this charming place I feel soon comforted by a long way through beautiful woods in the poetic morning mist; first on a wood path, then on a small road and after that a normal road, always down the valley to Lomnice.

Lomnice,

has a pronounced history, however it's today a township out-of-the way and even pushed back that can be taken for a mere village when looking on the map. The guidebook says:

...was settled probably already in early Middle Ages, which is testified by a found (founding of a) Romanesque church building in the area of the square. Lomnice had a strong Jewish community after which a 18-th Century synagogue and a Jewish cemetery with baroque tombstones remained. The manor house, originally an early medieval castle, was into its renaissance form rebuilt in the second half of 16-th Century and then further expanded by a baroque wing in the 18-th Century. The chapel, built around 1740 contains a valuable late gothic oriel form the late 15-th Century. The church built in the years 1669-84 belongs to the most outstanding examples of Moravian baroque style.

So far the guidebook. And even this is enough to awaken curiosity. I can add a few more glimpses. The book does not say that Lomnice was the original residence of the Lords of Lomnice, a pronounced Moravian family. The road I followed into the town climbs to the square through a serpentine bend below the church and right there you can find a spring, as if just ready for a thirsty wanderer; then past an inn and several decent town houses. There is a venerable rectangular square, but not paved as a whole. In its centre there is situated a wondrous column with several carved saints and – I'd nearly say – a spinney or grove. The manor house is in its upper corner, but it houses kind of foresters' school nowadays, so it is not open for public. I didn't find the synagogue then – only at my later visit, but it is a real wonder – residing in a small square in the middle of a real small town separated from the other. But we should mention also the church. It makes together with the column one whole and both together reflect perfectly the way of thinking of the counter-reformation. It's a good looking church, really worth a town, now even nicely restored, with a finely-tinted inside, which doesn't lack even marble. But it keeps the form of high baroque, so it makes an impression of both movement and constriction. Its dignity is underlined by semicircular windows, which darken the otherwise light and clear inside into an ascetic gloom. There are nicely preserved guilds' banners inside, but the greatest curiosity is probably in the narthex. Every entering visitor is there welcomed by a rood. But it is a strange rood. The convoluted figure on the cross with bared teeth not a minimum agrees with the iconographic type of Jesus' passion as it is rooted in Christian tradition. Do you take it already? It is not Jesus, but Dismas, the penitent and afterward saint rogue, who reminds the entering Christians, just recently snatched from the claws of reformation and restored to the catholic faith, of the permanent need of repentance. Really impressive!

My way leads from Lomnice up over steep slopes covered with meadows and unpleasantly thick groves, where I often lose my way. At last I strike a road leading to a small pleasant village Veselí, situated on the crest of the Svratka valley. From it I get down straight by a path that once had been probably an important road, but now is this hollowed track muddy, overgrown with nettles and full of annoying flies and midges. I reach the station in Borač in time - the train goes in twenty minutes. (But I hadn't known then, that trains on that line, the "Old Tišnov Railway" were practically always late.) My further way to Tišnov was without problem.

Tišnov

- an old settlement on an important merchants' route; after foundation of the Cistercian womens' cloister Porta coeli in Předklášteří it was raised to town

status. The town clusters around the upper square with an original church from the 13-th Century, which got in the 15-th Century battlements (!) and a separate tower. The monastery was built in the style of Burgundian gothic; its church, ambit and chapter hall are preserved in pristine condition. (That is very much and it makes Předklášteří a really important and beautiful gothic monument.) This "Heaven's Gate" was built in the years 1233-1239 by the queen Kunigunde, the second wife of Přemysl Otakar I., mother of the king Václav I. and saint Agnes od Bohemia.

It surely impolite to skimp such an important place as Tišnov by a couple of lines copied from the guidebook and describing the swimming pool, but since this travel diary describes only that, what I really experienced and saw on this journey, I am bound to do so. Because I visited in Tišnov neither Předklášteří (as on occasion of my ancient visit) nor the town with its impressive renaissance church in the square and several historical streets (as by my last previous visit), but just and only the swimming pool. It was a result of certain compromise between feeling tired and experiencing the obligation to travel further. In the distant glimpse of now, when I am writing this diary, seem the 14-15km to Nihov a manageable task for an afternoon's walk. (I reached Tišnov about noon.) But with the heavy burden of my pack such calculations had already proved problematic. And I needed a bath before the concert. Besides that, I had scheduled Předklášteří to be the very last point of my travel on Sunday – with a concert of Schola Gregoriana. The pool lied on my way (green marked path), so I chose the direction towards the pool – and I'll see it through later. The pool was very pleasant, with rather cool but very clean water, good sausages and beer, several pretty young girls and mothers, so I saw through and I remained there longer than should have and set out for no further journey, but neatly packed my things, got back to the station and went on by train to Křižanov and the local train to Velké Meziříčí.

Velké Meziříčí

*lies nearly on them motorway Praha-Brno in a canyon created by confluence of the small rivers, Oslava and Balinka, but even these two are said to be able of considerable mischief in case of flood. The railway line goes under the motorway and makes a bend round all the town, so it offers a panoramatic view of it. Rights of a burghers commune got Meziříčí in 1408 fro, Lacek of Kravaře and at the same time the stone wall with four gates was built. Its renaissance bloom is testified by houses in the square with sgrafitti. The two nave lofty gothic church of st.Nicholas is there too. Exactly there was the concert. The town used to be renowned for its "literates brotherhoods" (clubs of church singing) It seems - according to the number of notices and boards on various topics and with variety of activities – that also now the life in the parish is really abundant. There are apparently several priests, and the dean is either in favour with some authorities or a charismatic personality, because he's managed to get for his parish practically everything – from three vicars to summer camps and new bells. A *propos* bell foundering is – according to the guidebook – a part of local tradition of Velké Meziříčí not less than choir singing; a foundry of masters Adam and Jakub Matouš is mentioned there.*

Already during the "roundabout train tour" around the town I looked out and choose a small glen beyond the tracks, where I pitched the tent in thick grass so I was able to

discover most of the town sights already before the concert. The violin concert in the church was graceful not only due to the performer and the repertoire, but also thanks to concentrated auditorium.¹ But when listening to the program bonus I realized that nobody would be able to get out of the church dry. There was wind, thereafter rain and storm and in this all I tried to get to my linen temporary housing, which – being so hard tested first time – weathered it very well.

22-nd June – the 9-th day

Route: **Velké Meziříčí - Křižanov** - Praha (on foot, train)

This day, decision had to be made whether to prolong my pilgrimage for two more days (to Žďár nad Sázavou and Tišnov) , one day or to turn immediately homewards. Depleted funds and longing for the family decided for the third eventuality. But I hadn't yet fulfilled the task I had myself appointed there – to find the former boarding school, where my granny had spent two years of her youth. I found it eventually at the outskirts of the town. Nowadays it's an apprentice school for hotel industry and it looks surprisingly modern. It must have been completely new in the 1920s. My way leads past the manor house, which is worth seeing too. It's quite large and bears marks of nearly all architectural styles. It has even a moat and bastions with a extended park behind. Today it is the property of the Lichtenstein-Podsatzky family, which cares about it well. In one part thereof is located a rather funny looking Museum of motorways (probably dating back to totalitarian era).

Lunch break ended my visit to the house and nothing more remains ahead than the way back to Prague. The nearest local train is in three hours, so I can make the last 5km tour on the red marked tourist path over the motorway to the Křižanov station. I lost my way for a while in the area of windfallen trees, but the local railway is a reliable landmark – for a while I even go on the track. I refresh myself by a village pump and arrive without more adventure to the station in Křižanov and leave by train for Prague.

¹ The concerts themselves are not described here, but their review exists elsewhere.